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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI SEEKS DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION TO BORDER CRISIS

REF: DJIBOUTI 389

1. SUMMARY: On April 23, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement in local state-run media informing the public of a growing border dispute with Eritrea near Doumeira (reftel). President Ismail Omar Geullah visited the border April 22 and urged the Djiboutian military not to "give in to provocation." The declaration stressed that the GOJD is seeking a diplomatic solution to the crisis. The Ministry's declaration took up the entire front page of The Nation, the sole French-language newspaper in the country. (NOTE: Charge's meeting today with Foreign Minister will be reported septel. END NOTE.)

2. Post's translation of the French-language communique, as printed in state-run media, follows:

BEGIN TEXT OF POST TRANSLATION.

Declaration of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

"The Government of the Republic of Djibouti informs the public that a border dispute has arisen between the State of Eritrea and our country.

Over the past few weeks, the Obock administrative authorities have noticed that civil engineering work was being conducted on the other side of the border until public works vehicles (loaders, excavators and trucks) crossed the Eritrean border and continued these works on Djiboutian territory, precisely on the Djiboutian side of Ras Doumeira already defined on the map.

Our Armed Forces immediately reported to the area and confirmed the situation. They have clearly identified armed individuals and barracks on the other side of Ras Doumeira, as well as a trench line along the mountain ridge, a path and other embankment works in the cove.

Diplomatic actions have immediately been undertaken to express the Djiboutian Government's protest. Series of talks by diplomatic and political contacts at different levels have resulted in a telephone conversation between the two heads of state, Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti and Mr. Issayas Afwerki of Eritrea.

A spirit of appeasement and a desire for dialogue and understanding prevailed during the talks.

The two Presidents have stressed the need to resolve the border dispute with a meeting of the respective military authorities with the objective of reaching an agreement on the countries' already determined borders by using a map. The talks are scheduled for Thursday morning in Ras Doumeira; in the event that the issue remains, international arbitration will be sought.

In the meantime, the Djiboutian Armed Forces have resumed position on the heights of Ras Doumeira. Discussions are taking place to try to bring the two armies back to their initial position, i.e a few kilometers from the border itself, to avoid any risk of clashes.

Until now, the Government of Djibouti has made considerable efforts to not divulge the disagreement in order to first and foremost seek a concerted and peaceful solution.

Reason prevailed thanks to President Ismail Omar Guelleh with the aim to preserve the relations of friendship and cooperation between the Republic of Djibouti and the State of Eritrea.

Political contacts will continue to definitely put an end to this instability of Djibouti-Eritrean relations. "

Unfriendly activities at the border

The President in Doumeira

Yesterday, in the morning of April 22nd, the President of the Republic and Commander in Chief of the National Army, H.E. Ismail Omar Guelleh, visited the region of Doumeira, located in the most north-eastern part of the country, where unfriendly activities were reported in these recent weeks. On his arrival, President Guelleh was greeted by the Defense Minister and the Commander of the Army. Upon inspection of the area, the President ordered the Armed Forces not to yield to provocations and to just protect the totality of the territory. The Head of State returned to the capital city around 1 pm.

END TEXT OF POST TRANSLATION

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